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Senate

The Senate met at 10:31 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, in times of trouble You hear us. We cry to You and receive Your answers. May we embrace Your precepts as You guide us through the fog of our earthly pilgrimage.

Lord, may our lawmakers trust You for strength. Provide them with the powers of wisdom, discipline, and discernment. You have promised that those who trust patiently in You will soar high on wings like eagles, running without weariness and walking without fainting.

Mighty God, we praise Your matchless Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 23, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Linda Thomas-Greenfield, of Louisiana, to be the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today the Senate will complete the confirmation of two key nominees: Linda Thomas-Greenfield to serve as U.N. Ambassador and Tom Vilsack to serve as Agriculture Secretary.

As I said yesterday, the Senate will also confirm Jennifer Granholm this week to serve as the next Energy Sec-

retary and begin the confirmation of Dr. Miguel Cardona to serve as the next Education Secretary. We also hope to do Gina Raimondo, nominee for Secretary of Commerce, early next week.

Each of these nominees has received bipartisan support in committee. Each of these nominees is undoubtedly qualified for their positions, a stark departure from the caliber of nominees the Senate was made to consider during the previous administration.

Make no mistake, the Senate will move quickly to approve key officials in the Biden administration this work period. These Cabinet positions and Agencies have an immense influence over the policies of the United States, impacting hundreds of millions of American lives. At a time of acute national challenge, we need qualified leaders atop our Federal Agencies—and fast, and that is what we intend to do.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, on COVID, while the Senate will be busy fulfilling its constitutional duty to advise and consent on Presidential nominees, Democrats remain hard at work preparing the desperately needed COVID relief bill.

Our country is still in the throes of a crisis. Yesterday, we passed that grim milestone of 500,000 deaths, a towering and incomprehensible figure. Millions of Americans have reported being thousands of dollars behind on rent, on utilities. Small businesses are hanging on for dear life. Vaccinating 330 million Americans as efficiently as possible is one of the most crucial and complex undertakings of our times.

What we need to do now is put our foot on the gas to end the pandemic as quickly as possible, get our economy back to normal, and repair the damage that has been done. That is what the American Rescue Plan is all about. It will deliver the resources to keep small businesses afloat; Americans in their homes; and teachers, firefighters, and other essential employees in the public sector on the job.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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